



ILLUSTRIOUS LIFESTYLE WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO BHAGATA'S LIVING IN ANDHRA PRADESH

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ABSTRACT

Bhagata is one of the ancient tribes living in Andhra country right from immemorable times. They are the lovers of peace. They engage in different professions like agriculture, tool making, and correction of forest products including honey. They have different marriages such as marriage by negotiation, marriage by capture, marriage by elopement and marriage by love. Widow marriages are common but only with the consent of the widow. The relatives of the deceased like elder brother or younger brother used to marry widow. The Bagatas living South of Paderu area possess surnames or septs and these septs regulate the matrimonial alliances. The common septs or surnames are Killo, Kottagulli, Desagiri, Pangi, Tammarabu, Lake, Tangula, Matyaracha, Mattam, Kuntur, Kimudu, Gollori, Majji, Solabam, Gangapujari, Durgapujari, Robba, Tummala, Pujari, Kontili, Sagina, Kankipati, Lota, Madagada, Bakuru, Minumuluru etc. Some of the surnames indicate totemic clans such as Killo (Tiger), Korra (Son), Gallori (Monkey), Kimudu (Bear), Matsya (Fish), Chelli (Goat) etc, and they speak Adivasi Oriya. Bagata society is predominantly the patriarchal. Head of the family is a man who exercises his authority over his family. They used to celebrate the festivals such as Chaitra festival and Bali Devatha festival.

KEYWORDS: Tribes, Elopement and Widow Marriage, Chaitra, Bali Devatha Festival.

INTRODUCTION

Andhra country was originally inhabited by Tribals right from the immemorable times. Some of the tribes have migrated from North India to South, particularly to Andhra country. Several tribes such as Savara, Pulinda, Kukkura, Andhaka, Bhoja, Bhil, Bagata, Konda Dora, Konda Reddies, Chenchu, etc are living on the hill tops and the forest area of Andhra Pradesh right from Srikakulam to Adilabad upto 2014. In 2014, Andhra Pradesh was divided into 2 States. Still the tribes are having inter-relations with their counterparts living in both the states. Present research paper throws light on life of Bhagatas, one of the oldest tribe living in Andhra Pradesh.

Objectives of the Study:

The Present research paper has been written on keeping a view on following objectives:

1. To bring out the life style of Bhagatas.
2. To analyze the festivals and marriages taking place within the Bhagata tribe.
3. To bring out the position of women of Bhagata tribe.
4. A focus must be made on the economic life of Bhagatas.

On the basis of following objectives, the present research paper has been completed.

METHODOLOGY

Several books have been consulted pertaining to the tribes living in Andhra to complete this research paper. Tribal areas have been visited to understand their lifestyle, particularly the Bhagatas living in North Coastal Andhra. Experts in the tribal

studies have been consulted to take stock of the situation on the spot. Several researches have been conducted to know the recreational facilities adopted by Bhagatas and other tribes of North Coastal Andhra personally participated in the festivals organized by Bhagatas. Doctrinaire approach has been made to complete this research paper.

Hypothesis:

On the basis of tentative conclusions, present research paper has been written.

1. Bhagatas are living in North Coastal Andhra.
2. They have followed four kinds of marriages such as marriage by negotiation, marriage by love, marriage by elopement and marriage by capture.
3. Bhagatas used to worship Sanku Devata, Jakara Devata, Bali Devata, Durga, etc.
4. The Bhagata tribe celebrates Bali Devatha festival and Chaitra festival.

The Bhagata tribe enjoys feasts coupled with alcohol at the time of marriages and festivals. They lead a peaceful life having good relations with other tribes. On the basis of these conclusions, present research paper has been written.

Significance of the Study:

The people living in plain area do not have relations with the people living in agency areas. The plain area people have no knowledge about the lifestyle of Bhagatas and other tribes. The modern civilized people should know all the aspects relating to Bhagata tribe to intermingle with them to remove the disparities

between the tribal population and the plain area population.

Theme of the Paper:

The Bhagata's are the predominant tribe living in North Coastal Andhra districts such as Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram and Srikakulam. Muttadar system can be found in the Bagata community. Village headman would be called as Muttadars. Each Muttadar would head 10 to 15 villages. The people of the villages should pay the tax and obey the orders of Muttadars. Muttadar system was very strong in Visakhapatnam district which was responsible for movements launched by the tribes. These headmen acted as intermediary landlords and they used to collect revenue from cultivators and paid fixed sums either to former zamindars or British administrators in India. Bagatas dominate the tribal society existed in the Visakhapatnam. Padal is popular title held by the people living at the Orissa borders. The Bagatas living South of Paderu area possess surnames or septs and these septs regulate the matrimonial alliances. The common septs or surnames are Killo, Kottagulli, Desagiri, Pangi, Tammarabu, Lake, Tangula, Matyaracha, Mattam, Kuntur, Kimudu, Gollori, Majji, Solabam, Gangapujari, Durgapujari, Robba, Tummala, Pujari, Kontili, Sagina, Kankipati, Lota, Madagada, Bakuru, Minumuluru etc. Some of the surnames indicate totemic clans such as Killo (Tiger), Korra (Son), Gallori (Monkey), Kimudu (Bear), Matsya (Fish), Chelli (Goat) etc, and they speak Adivasi Oriya. Like Andhs, Bagata society is predominantly the patriarchal. Head of the family is a man who exercises his authority over his family. Bagata tribe also adopts the custom of Monogamy. But rich people do marry more than one wife. Polygamy could be seen only in some areas of Araku and Paderu region. Different kinds of marriages are allowed in Bagata society. Marriage by elopement, marriage through love, marriage by capture, marriage by service and marriage by negotiations are socially accepted ways of acquiring mates. The rituals observed by Bagata tribe are different from one area to the other. The marriage ceremonies among the Bagatas living in Paderu region has been described here under:

The Bagata boy's family would reach the Village headman and reveal him their wish to marry a girl belonged to the family of particular village. The boy's family consisting of three to five members would go to the girl's village to propose marriage with the family members of the girl. The boy's family members wish to propose the marriages in indirect way. The boy's family members would ask the girl's family members to allow them to offer a flower available in their garden. The parents of the girl can understand the intention of the boy's family members and conduct enquiry about the status of the boy. If both the parties agreed for marriage alliance, their consent would be celebrated with liquor party. After 10 to 15 days of their first visit, a betrothal ceremony is observed. The boy's party carries with them 10 to 20 measures of rice, a goat, and two sarees with blouses (one for the bride) and another for her mother, a silver ring and thick bunch of cotton garland (Bondu). The bride's family offers feast to the community members with the rice and goat brought by the bridegroom's family members. The boy's party put the bondu or cotton garland on the neck of the bride and offers her a ring. After the feast is completed, the bride price and date of marriage would be fixed by both the parties.

Generally marriages are fixed after six months or one year of betrothal ceremony. Just before two days of the marriage ceremony, the boy's party would proceed to the girl's village by taking two goats and large quantity of rice. The boy's party would carry Kata Petta, a kind of suitcase, carrying new clothes and ornaments for both girl and her mother. After knowing about the arrival of the boy's party, the bride's party carries cooked food, water, etc, to outskirts and feed the groom's party. This feast is known as 'dulivindu' in local parlance. The girl's parents arrange community feast with rice, dal and meat provided by boy's parents. The next day, the bride is taken to the groom's village with the accompaniment of beatings of drums and blowing of trumpets. The girl's party waits at the outskirts of village where the boy's party serves lunch (Dulivindu). Then the bride groom and the bride stand on the bridal path and religious priest (Disari) sacrifices a fowl. He places lime, flowers, coconut, a wick, etc, in a leaf plate made out of banyan leaves on the design drawn and waves around the couple thrice (Surulimpu). Both groom and bride spit into the leaf plate and then leaf plate is thrown away. A decorated pot is kept behind the bride and groom and both of them kick the pot (kicking the Royyakunda). Then the couple accompanied by ceremonial persons and reached the place of the meeting of village council. With the permission of the head of the village council, dance would be organized to entertain the marriage guests. Both bride and bridegroom would be taken in procession by making them to sit on the shoulders of their friends by beating drums. The procession would come to an end immediately after entering in the bridegroom's house and reach the pandal where it has been setup. With the blessings of Disari, the bridegroom presses the feet of bride and ties the marriage badge on the neck of the bride. They would be taken into a room and make them to sit on wooden stools for receiving blessings from their elders. The food is cooked by mixing greengram which is called pulagam. The pulagam is kept before the married couple. Both bride and bridegroom take the pulagam, smears on each other which led them to take bath immediately.

The ceremonial friends hold their hands and take a walk three times around the central pole of marriage booth. Both bride and bridegroom anoint oil and turmeric paste to each other which is a part of tribal marriage ceremony, originally celebrated at Paderu and Araku region of Visakhapatnam. The Disari prepares a small cup out of food and put a pumpkin wrapped with adda leaves and a small rope is tied to it. This is considered as a toy sheep (sailor sheep). Kind of activities to please the marriage party would be performed by the ceremonial friends of bride and bridegroom. Some persons try to hide it and others beat it with sticks. The music is played while they try to chase the sheep and ultimately they break the pumpkin with their sticks. These games are organized only to make merriment. Both bridegroom and bride are taken to a stream where the village people draw the water for their general use. Males and females take a rope, a pot and vermilion stones to be decorated by Kumkum and turmeric. Then both male and female take mouthful of water and spit on each other. The groom walks in front by carrying a stick on his shoulders along with a rope coil. While walking he lowers his stick and allows the rope coil to fall. The bride has to take it and put on the stick. Sometimes the bride refuses to

give back the rope coil unless the bridegroom promises to give cold and sometimes child, etc. They make merriments on the way and reach home. This ritual of bringing water from stream is called 'Gaddugonapadamu' locally.

Some quantity of rice would be poured on the mat and asked the bridegroom to measure properly. Meanwhile, the bride is also asked to do the same. At the time of measuring the rice by bride, the bridegroom would take away some portion of the rice which should be identified by the bride. The bride would ask the bridegroom to makeup the deficiency of rice which has been taken by him. The groom refuses to make good of deficiency unless the bride promise to give back good male or female child. All relatives gathered make lot of fun during this ritual. This type of activity would be performed to bless both bride and bridegroom to get sufficient food throughout their life. Both bride and bridegroom would go to the forest with bow and an arrow. Immediately after entering in the forests, they touch a tree and salute it.

Marriage by capture is another method adopted by the tribes at Paderu and Araku. Generally this kind of marriage would take place among the poor boys that are unable to bare the bride price and marriage expenditure. After the capture, the bridegroom is to pay the least amount of bride price to the bride's parents. After receiving the bride price, they would go back to their village and organize community feast to accept the bridegroom into their livelihood. In case the girl has rejected the boy to marry, the boy is to pay the fine for capturing the girl against her will. Marriages by service, by love and elopement and by exchange are also socially accepted ways of acquiring mates.

The divorce is permitted by the elders of Bagata tribe. Maganali divorce is the approved method of divorce among Bagatas. If a wife of a man develops illegal relations with another man and elopes with him to his village, the first husband would go to the village where his wife is living with another person. Elders of both the villages meet at the outskirts of the villages and settle the disputes in presence of both the parties. Quantum of compensation would be decided by the elder, whom is to be paid by the second husband to the first husband of the female. This kind of compensation is called Maganali in local dialect. The second husband has to pay the compensation for the ornaments, clothing and other marriage expenditure incurred by the first husband. After the settlement of the dispute, the later husband arranges feast at the residence of the village head man with two fowls called Adumkodi and Bedumkodi in local parlance. Both parties sit in a single row, first husband along with the elder men by his side, and the second husband with his elders. The wife of the headman serves the food and they exchange the leaf plates. The first husband takes a morsel of food from the mouth of second husband and second husband reciprocates. After this feast, compensation is paid and they depart to their respective villages.

Devaranyaya marriage is allowed among the Bagatas. After the death of her husband, a widow can marry the younger brother or elder brother of the deceased. This marriage would be consummated only on the willing of the widow. If she wants,

she can remain unmarried and allowed to look after her children. On the eleventh day of the death of her husband, his younger brother would offer a new saree and bangles to her. This ritual is called Musuku Veyuta (to wear pardha) in local dialect.

The Pregnant lady is not allowed to go to the forest or attend the social functions from her seventh month onwards. Delivery takes place in a corner of the house or in a varanda, covered with cloth. After the birth of the new baby, it is given bath and anoint turmeric paste to the body. The purificatory ceremony would take place on the seventh day of the birth of the baby. Until this ceremony is performed, she is not allowed to go to any place or social functions as she is treated to be unclean. She takes bath and washes her clothes in a stream and offers flowers and fruits to the spirits of hill streams along with Guruvvari, the elder of the community.

At the age of puberty, a ceremony would be performed. The girl would be asked to sit on a mat and she will be given a separate plate and tumbler. This type of custom could be seen even among the Hindu communities living in the plain areas. On the seventh day, she will be asked to take head bath and anointed turmeric paste on her body as a mark of purification. She wears new clothes. Then she is allowed to sit under a pandal constructed for this purpose. All the relatives and villagers bless her with turmeric rice and give their presentations. After the bathing activities are completed, Dimsa dance would be performed on the night of the seventh day and offer non-vegetarian feast to their relatives. If the girl is poor, no such ceremonies would be observed and the girl is taken to stream to take bath and anoint turmeric paste on her body. Only vegetarian feast would be offered to their relatives.

In case of death of male or female of Bagata tribe, same would be informed to his relatives. The dead body would be given bath and anoint turmeric paste and the body would be placed on wooden structure to perform funeral ceremony. The dead is either buried or cremated depending on the economic condition of the family. But if a person dies with an endemic disease, his body is buried; expecting that the smoke comes out of cremation may harm the people. On the third day, semi funeral activities would be performed to please the soul of the deceased. The male members would go to the burial ground, clean the place with cow dung water and pour the ragi powder on that place to indicate the purification of soul of the deceased. They offer fruits, prasadam (prepared with rice and jaggery), flowers etc, light incense sticks and return to their house. On the eleventh day, complete funeral activities would be performed like the fellow Hindu Communities. Even the Hindu communities observe funeral activities on eleventh day of the death of a person. The friends and relatives offer fruits, flowers and pumpkin and to support financially to the buried family. Tulasi plant is planted on that place and offered sacrificial food to the tulasi plant. The priest chants mantras to make the soul keep rest in the heaven. A fowl is sacrificed. The fowl is cooked and the curry along with prasadam is placed on a fixed place and they return home with the expectation that the dead will come in the shape of dog or crow and eat. A non-vegetarian feast with liquor is arranged on that day.

The Bagatas worship village gods and goddesses such as Sanku Devata (Village deity), Jakara Devata (goddesses of rain and crops), Bali Devata (goddess of group of villages or Muttas), Durga, etc. They perform all the festivals but the important one is the Bali Devata festival with pomp and gaiety. Bali Devatha festival would be celebrated for 12 days. 30 to 50 villages under a Mutta, celebrate this festival in the month of September. They sacrifice fowls, goats and they offer prayers to their village deities. The priest would bring new baskets containing mud and manure and plant the wheat seeds in those baskets. He keeps these baskets in the shrine of Bali devatha generally situated in the centre of the village. Throughout the twelve days, the priest waters the new seed plants. The villagers perform Dimsa dance which is popular in Paderu area. This dance has been recognized by Central Tribal Society. On eleventh day, the priest ties a flower of banana plant over the baskets. On the twelfth day, 10 to 12 members used to go the forest and pluck the sugarcane plant and put them at the shrine where the Bali Devatha festival is being celebrated. The priests observe fast and sacrifice goats and fowls and offer the sacrificial food to the goddess. He believes that goddess gives him seeds from the plantain flower tied over the baskets in which wheat seeds are watered. The Priest distributes the seeds to all the villagers as these charmed seeds are to be mixed with their seeds. During these celebrations, some persons fall into trance and such persons are made to sit on the stool prepared out of sharp thorns in order to test whether they are really possessed by god's spirit or not. After the abolition of Muttadari system, the celebration of Bali Devatha festival has been considerably limited to some parts. No pomp and gaiety could be observed in the celebration of this festival.

Another festival celebrated by Bagatas is the Chaitra festival. This festival can be observed in March-April of every year. During the summer, no ryots could be found on the fields to carry on the agricultural activities. They will go in deep forests for hunting to prove their courage, valour and caliber to hunt the animals. The men would not return to their villages if they fail to hunt the animals. They would remain in the forests till the big animal is hunted. They would return to the village with the hunted animal which would be welcomed by men and women by sharing their joy with the performance of dance. The meat of the animal would be distributed by packing in the adda leaves. Even if a small piece is available, it would be distributed among the villagers.

CONCLUSION

The present paper throws light on Bhagatas who are living in North Coastal Andhra. They have cordial relations with the plain area people and the other tribes living in agency area. Their festivals, marriages and habits are totally different from the people living in plain area. Thus, the present research paper is a wonderful artistic piece to provide information about Bhagata tribe.

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